



March 28, 1979

The Honorable Floyd R. Correa
Governor, Pueblo of Laguna
P.O. Box 194
Laguna, New Mexico 87026

Dear Governor Correa:

Your letter of November 13, 1978 stated your concern about the Company's action on its planned reclamation program in the Gavilan Mesa area, and asked for an explanation of how the Company plans to reclaim this area. I apologize for my late reply and hope that the delay has not caused you inconvenience. My reply was delayed in order to prepare revisions to the Mining and Reclamation Plan, currently on file with the Area Mining Supervisor of the United States Geological Survey, and to allow the enclosure with this letter of a copy of the Annual Reclamation Report for 1978 that we have submitted to the Supervisor.

Your letter referred to the Mine Examination Report, dated October 27, 1978, by Mr. Dale C. Jones of the U.S.G.S. This report contains a map of northwest Gavilan Mesa, that Mr. Jones obtained from Anaconda, which shows the current and future mining areas in North Jackpile and the waste dumps associated with them. This map was not intended to show the areas that will be backfilled, however, the backfill areas do coincide with the mining areas as shown. Pushbacks NJ 17, 23, 27, 32, 37 and 45 will receive backfill. Backfilling operations in this area began just after the first of this year in the mined-out portion adjacent to NJ 17, and about three million tons have been backfilled there to date.

The primary objective of our reclamation program is to rehabilitate disturbed land surfaces to the extent reasonable under present regulations and with consideration given to the costs involved. To achieve this, we must consider not only such factors as health and safety regulations, esthetics, and Pueblo input, but we must also consider mining strategies and operating conditions. An example of an operational condition has been the Gavilan Mesa area. Mining in this area now requires that stripping be started at the top of Gavilan Mesa, which is about 300 feet higher than has been stripped in many years. Disposing of this additional amount of stripping discard in surface dumps instead of backfill areas is an operational consideration because the mined-out areas that are now available for backfilling are needed to contain future stripping discard from the lower benches and mining waste from the mineralized zones.

Mining and reclamation activity in the Gavilan Mesa area consists of stockpiling topsoil for future use, backfilling of available mined-out areas with stripping discard and mining waste, and the placement of excess

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stripping discard and mining waste in dumps. The mineralized zones of the mining areas will be covered to the extent that radiation will not exceed applicable safety standards. All final backfill and dump areas will have a cover of topsoil and vegetation will be established. The black waste dump on the southeast edge of Gavilan Mesa, that was mentioned in Mr. Jones' report, will also be reclaimed in this manner.

Backfilling is not an innovation in Anaconda's mining operations for it has been practiced for many years as an economic expedient. The enclosed Annual Reclamation Report for 1978 shows that, from a total of 35.1 million tons of material excavated from the open pit in 1978, 21.4 million tons, or approximately 61%, were backfilled. However, prior to 1978, an additional estimated 36 million tons of stripping discard and mining waste was backfilled in mined-out areas.

Anaconda recognizes that backfilling is a reclamation practice of mutual concern to the Pueblo of Laguna and the Company. It is Anaconda's sincere intention to carry on operations in a workmanlike manner and to comply with all applicable laws and regulations relating to the protection of the environment governing its operations.

If you would like further clarification of this matter, please let me know at your convenience.

Sincerely,



R.D. LYNN
General Manager

RDL/jms

Encl.

cc (w/encl): Area Mining Supervisor
U.S.G.S.
Superintendent
Southern Pueblos Agency, B.I.A.

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